

REMARKS

This Amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action mailed November 2, 2004. Claims 1-14 remain pending in the application and claims 1-12 were allowed. Claims 13 and 14 stand rejected. Claim 13 has been amended herein. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of claims 13 and 14 in view of the following remarks.

Objections to the Drawings

The drawings were objected to for informalities related to reference numerals. The drawings have been amended to include reference numeral 52 in FIG. 3. Copies of an annotated drawing sheet showing the changes made to FIG. 3, as well as a replacement drawing sheet incorporating the change, are submitted herewith for review and approval by the Examiner. Upon approval by the Examiner, Applicants respectfully request that the objections to the drawings be withdrawn.

Claims Rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,085,483 to Kurosaki. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections of claims 13 and 14 because Kurosaki does not teach or suggest each and every element of these claims. Moreover, Applicants assert that the Examiner's interpretation of the claim language "opening" to cover very small openings in an

automotive door trim panel is inconsistent with the Specification. Specifically, the Specification discloses an access panel that is removably securable over an access opening in a door trim panel. The access opening is sized to facilitate servicing, installing, or removing various interior door accessories through the access opening. While Applicants believe that the Examiner's interpretation is inconsistent with the claim language, in light of the Specification, claim 13 has been amended to recite an "access opening sized to facilitate the installation and servicing of door accessories within the interior of an automobile door" in an effort to advance prosecution.

As amended, claim 13 is directed to a method of securing an access panel proximate an access opening that is sized to facilitate the installation and servicing of door accessories within the interior of an automobile door, the method comprising:

positioning the access panel proximate the access opening;

sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel, generally along a direction parallel to a planar surface of the door trim panel; and

engaging connectors on the access panel with corresponding connectors on the door trim panel while sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel (emphasis added).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 13 over Kurosaki because Kurosaki does not teach or suggest positioning an access panel proximate an access opening that is sized to facilitate installing or servicing door accessories therethrough, as required by claim 13. Rather, Kurosaki is directed to a panel that is used for decorative door lining purposes only. No access opening is disclosed for facilitating the installation of door trim components within a door interior. The panels of

Kurosaki are only shown and described as being mounted to solid surfaces of a door assembly. Applicants note that the feature in FIG. 8 of Kurosaki, referenced in the Office Action, is not an access opening that is sized to facilitate the installation or servicing of accessories mounted within the interior of an automotive door assembly. Kurosaki, therefore, does not teach or suggest covering an access opening in an interior door trim panel as set forth in claim 13.

Moreover, it is not apparent whether the feature referred to in the Office Action is even an opening. FIG. 8 of Kurosaki is not sufficiently detailed to indicate whether the feature is an opening or a solid surface. The feature may just as well be a deboss or recessed area on the solid surface of the door trim panel, and Kurosaki provides no description of what this feature may be. For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 13 over Kurosaki be withdrawn.

Claim 14 depends from independent claim 13 and therefore includes all features recited in claim 13. Claim 14 is therefore in condition for allowance for at least the reasons stated above for claim 13. Moreover, Kurosaki does not teach or suggest "moving the access panel relative to the door trim panel to expose the opening in the door trim panel," as recited in claim 14. Applicants note that the opening referred to in claim 14 is the access opening discussed above with respect to claim 13. Even if the feature in FIG. 8 of Kurosaki was an opening in the door trim panel, that feature is not an access opening that is sized to facilitate the installation or servicing of interior door components. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 14 over Kurosaki be withdrawn.

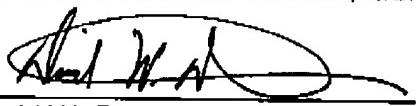
In view of the foregoing amendments to the claims and remarks given herein, Applicants respectfully believe this case is in condition for allowance and respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner believes any detailed language of the claims requires further discussion, the Examiner is respectfully asked to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the matter may be promptly resolved. The Examiner's prompt attention to this matter is appreciated.

Applicants are of the opinion that no additional fee is due as a result of this amendment. If any charges or credits are necessary to complete this communication, please apply them to Deposit Account No. 23-3000.

Respectfully submitted,

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ANNOTATED SHEET SHOWING CHANGES

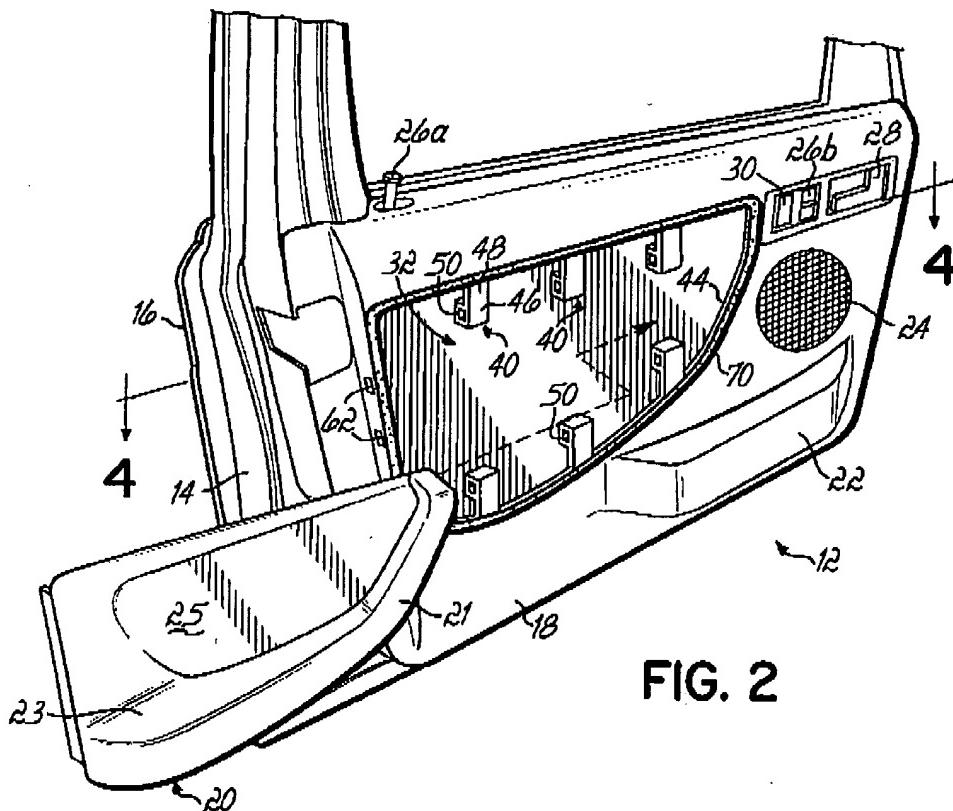


FIG. 2

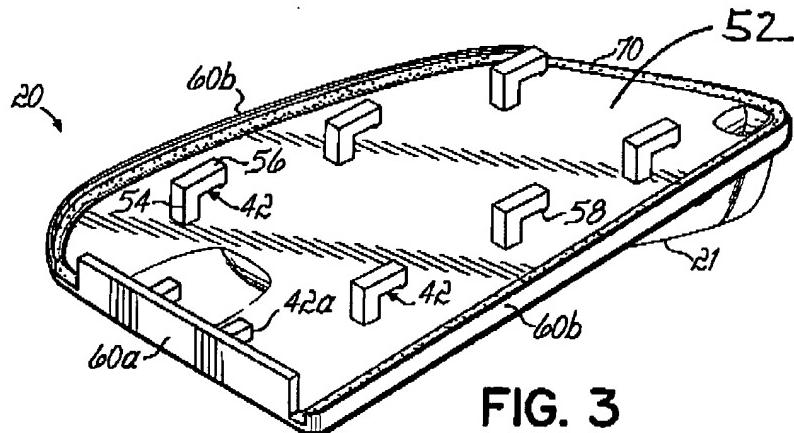


FIG. 3

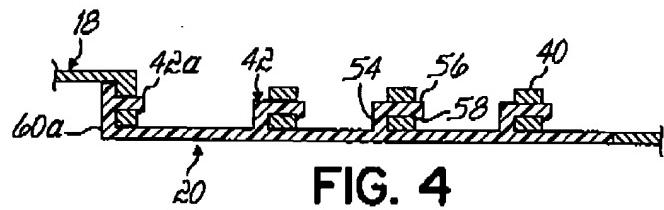


FIG. 4